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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DOHA 000360

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STATE FOR NEA/ARPI, NEA/RA, & DRL

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [QA](#)

SUBJECT: NATIONALITY LAW: CITIZENSHIP AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

REF: A. 04 DOHA 2010

[1](#)B. 05 DOHA 723

[1](#)C. 05 DOHA 728

[1](#)D. 05 DOHA 845

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Classified By: Amb. Chase Untermeyer for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. The recent Amiri decision to restore citizenship to approximately 6,000 people who were stripped of their Qatari nationality last year came as a welcome surprise to thousands of people whose fate has been uncertain for over a year. Not coincidentally, the decision comes on the heels of a newly enacted nationality law that speaks directly to this issue. Elation with the Amiri decision is mitigated by concerns with the new nationality law, which imposes limits on the political rights of those whose citizenship will be restored (REFTELS A & D). End Summary.

The Decision & Origin of the Problem

[1](#)2. (C) In early February, the Amir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, issued a decision to restore citizenship to approximately 6,000 people stripped of Qatari nationality last year. Post first reported on this issue fourteen months ago when the Qatari government initiated this policy of revoking or stripping nationality from members of the Al-Ghufran branch of the Al-Murra tribe. The Al-Murra is the largest tribe in Qatar with strong links to Saudi Arabia. Victims and critics of the policy maintained they were being unfairly targeted by the government because of their Saudi origin and because of the government's intent on limiting the political rights of some citizens. In response to an official query from Post, the GOQ asserted that it had been compelled to revoke the nationality of these individuals because they were holding dual nationality, a status not permissible under Qatari law (REFTELS B & C). It is alleged that approximately 6,000 people lost their Qatari nationality through revocation. Those holding government employment lost their jobs, and their entire families lost government benefits (housing, education, employment, health, etc.) for which they were eligible as citizens of Qatar.

Political Implications of the New Nationality Law

[1](#)3. (C) At the close of 2005, a new nationality came into effect. Among other things, Law No. 38 of 2005 addresses the issue of those whose nationality was revoked. As with the constitution, the new nationality law cannot be amended for ten years. Many view the new nationality law as the prelude

to the Amiri decision inasmuch as it established the basis of citizenship, the parameters for restoring citizenship, and the political implications of being stripped of one's nationality. The new nationality law defines four categories of citizenship and the bases for withdrawing and restoring citizenship. With regard to the Al-Murra tribe, the more critical provision is found in Article 15, which affirms the right of suffrage for those with restored citizenship, yet denies their right to candidacy or nomination in any legislative body for a period of ten years from the date of restoration of their citizenship.

Initial Reactions

¶4. (C) In the weeks following the Amiri decision, Post contacted various individuals who had approached the Embassy last year when this matter first emerged. The individuals were keen to express their gratitude to the Amir, stating that the whole tribe welcomed the decision. While all expressed their happiness with the news and their relief that this matter could finally be put to rest, they were nevertheless concerned with how the procedures for restoring citizenship would be implemented and the impact the new nationality law would have on their political rights.

A Hard Lesson Learned

¶5. (C) Contacts described the personal and professional hardships endured when they lost their jobs, housing, and various government allowances. Many were forced to live on the generosity of other families and were deeply ashamed of their inability to provide for their family. The suffering and indignity of entreating for assistance, being ignored and looked down upon were not only demeaning but also appear to

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have, at least in the short run, crushed or weakened the determination and resistance that these individuals had displayed last year. Individuals were so grateful to have their citizenship restored that they were not willing to press the issue of limits on their political rights. When queried how they felt about not being able to run for political office for at least ten years, one individual stated, "We are just happy to get our jobs and allowances back and not be viewed with disgust or as outsiders who did something wrong." One legal analyst observed that the Al Murras would not fight for their political rights. "The members are not looking for trouble, and pushing for full political rights would be trouble. They are not willing or eager to repeat their experiences of the past year."

Part of a Larger Government Strategy?

¶6. (C) Since news first emerged of the revocation of people's nationality last year, many have speculated that the policy represented an attempt by the Qatari government to restrict citizenship and limit the political rights of a broad section of its populace prior to holding first-ever parliamentary elections. Further, many maintained that by targeting the AlMurras, the largest tribe in Qatar at estimated forty thousand, the GOQ was pre-empting possible Sadi interference in Qatari politics in the elections, predicted for 2007. To support these assertions, some allude to the outcome of the Municipal Council elections of 2003. Seven members of the Al-Murra tribe won seats on the Council out of a total of 29. While this represents only about twenty-five percent of the Council, some assert that it still raised apprehension on the part of the government that the tribe could potentially form a large voting bloc in the new parliament. An election law, which will expound on the legal issues surrounding elections

and voter rights, is still pending.

17. (C) Members of the Al Murra tribe have also disclosed that there is a new requirement compelling those whose nationality was revoked and who cannot demonstrate proof that they were born in Qatar, to claim Saudi Arabia as their place of birth on their official documents. They view this new requirement with suspicion, especially in light of the ten-year stipulations barring changes to the new nationality law and those with restored citizenship from running for office. According to some, the government can use the place of birth as a justification for further derogating the political rights of this group in ten years time when it has the ability to make amendments to the nationality law.

18. (C) To date, very few people have had their citizenship restored. Also, it is still unknown whether or not the majority of those whose nationality was revoked and who had to obtain or declare another nationality will be able to recover their Qatari citizenship. Both the chairperson and secretary general of the National Human Rights Committee

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asserted, however, that approximately 200 people would not be able to restore their nationality due to security reasons. Post will continue to monitor this issue and report on developments.

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